

## Ramblings from *The Fat Controller* (Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July)

I made the mistake of chatting with *Perky* and sort-of volunteering to contribute to the Ham Shag! I got a bit carried away - you have been warned.

Firstly, an important hashing question. Would you rather have a good/great hash trail from an average/poor pub or the reverse – a poor or badly set trail from a great pub with a selection of fine ales? Ideally of course we would all like the perfect hash trail from an idyllic pub serving the finest ales from far and wide! We can possibly achieve this from our past experience, research and a smattering of good fortune!

Through the K&A WhatsApp group chat, I have given details of my occasional afternoon pub-crawls around Bath (and sometimes Bristol) for a heads-up on what's what on the pub/beer scene. Last Monday (17<sup>th</sup>) – which was a warm and pleasant day (compared to the weekend weather at the Tuckers Grave hash camp – more of that later), we tried Keynsham for a change. The relevance of this is that Keynsham is a popular choice for setting hash trails, so I thought I'd check out the pubs for future reference.

Starting at The Old Bank with Nuttycombe Pitchfork (£3.90) was a decent way to kick-off said crawl. Down the High Street to the Trout Tavern and Wainwrights Amber (at £4.00 something) which was a tad cold, but all right. The Ship Inn is currently closed so we headed to the Talbot Inn (a Hungry Horse pub) for some food – 2 meals for £12.00. Abbot Ale was not on, so I opted for the Greene King IPA, which I returned, as unfortunately it was seriously not good. Not impressed, I went for the Italian lager Peroni. Across to the New Inn which no longer serves Butcombe Bitter but nowadays only has (yes, you've guessed it) Doom Bar (£4.50) - it was an OK pint, which we drank on the patio overlooking the Chew River. We made our way back to Keynsham High Street, where I discovered that First Bus had cancelled my bus, so I passed the time for a final pint in The Lockkeeper - a Youngs pub (4.5% Youngs Special at £4.95 was actually nothing special!). I never made it to the Crown Inn opposite the football and rugby grounds. My research was ultimately inconclusive, but I did rack up a fair few steps!

Anyway, on to the last 3 K&A hashes.

### #1717 Star Inn, Pucklechurch (Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July)

A very nice evening from an area frequently hashed from one of the 2 pubs left in the village. *No Shirt* was the hare, and it was good to see *Fruitcake* back hashing again now she has had her visa problems resolved. A nice trail headed west across several fields and tracks towards Emersons Green, along parts of the Dramway, before turning North, up a slow climb to Parkend and back to the pub. 18 hashers out tonight with visitors *Instant Whip* and *Heir Flash* from Malvern H3 (I may have been misinformed where they were actually from!!) completed the well-laid trail. The Star was a bit quiet, and no longer serves Bass ale, but like many pubs these days the only ale on offer is Doom Bar – reasonably priced and about as good as Doom Bar gets.

My Verdict – Hash Trail 8/10 – Pub/Beer a generous 5/10.

### #1718 Tuckers Grave Hash Camp (Friday 14<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July)

The third annual hash camp from the excellent and unique Tuckers Grave and the first time we agreed on a 2 night stay (the Tuckers Grave camp-site now sports a brand new toilet and shower block). I booked in for both nights and rented a 3 to 4 berth tent (£12 for 7 days) from Share and Repair in Bath. But typically, the British weather of persistent rain and strong winds dictated I would abandon the Friday, and so I arrived at 12.00 on Saturday. *Kneed* also elected against camping as well. Although a warm and pleasant afternoon, the winds were still pretty gusty. I thought I would delay pitching my tent until after the hash. *Perky* arrived but without the barbecue – potentially scuppering my plans for cooking my burgers and sausages! Whilst waiting for *Lightweight* to set the Hash, we headed to the pub to check out the beer. Butcombe bitter was the only draught ale available (direct from the barrel), but there was about 12 different ciders to choose from. Mostly were glow-in-the-dark orange!

At 14:00 hours, we (*Perky*, *L'Escargot*, *Snails Nuts*, *X-rated*, *Iron Maiden with Beau*, *myself* and *Lightweight*) set-off. *Kneed* was a no-show and *Little Sai Wanker* was nowhere to be seen. Unusually, the pub/beer stop was after the first 30 minutes, the reason being the Faulkland Inn was closing at 14:30. Butcombe Bitter was the only cask ale on, but it wasn't the best. At this point *LSW* was spotted heading up the road towards us, the Butcombe had run

out, so we continued on our way. We gave the hare a 10 minute head start to complete setting the trail across the rolling hills of Mendips. There are limited footpaths in this part of Somerset, but nonetheless, the hare made a good effort to keep us interested (or more to the point to get back to the Tuckers Grave). It's a bad sign when *X-rated* short-cuts, and we nearly got back before the hare, as all but *Iron Maiden* and *LSW* joined *X-rated*.

*Lightweight* started his way through the 12 ciders whilst the rest of us continued where we left off – with Butcombe once back in the pub. *LSW* informed us he had brought a large chunk of raw cow and he was intent on barbecuing it, so he took off towards Radstock in search of a portable barbecue. Radstock is only about 4 miles away but *LSW* was gone for what seemed like a couple of hours. Problem solved for my burgers and sausages, although there wasn't much room left after *LSW* loaded his steak on it.

Early evening sunshine turned into a drizzle and *X-rated* headed home, so I made the decision to sleep in the car, rather than put the tent up. Likewise *Lightweight* and *Iron Maiden*, however, they had the dog as a sleeping companion. We had a few beers up in the parlour bar and *L'escargot* and myself continued with some rather good red wine before I literally climbed into my car to sleep.

Sunday morning dawned with a blue sky, sunshine and the wind had abated a little, so I set-about breakfast at just before 8. Big disappointment was that there was no Sunday hash, so the small band of hashers departed quite early. I headed off towards Blaise castle for the Bristol Hash.

My Verdict – Hash Trail a reluctant 8/10 – Pub/Beer also 8/10 (would have got a 9 if more than 1 real ale available or if I was a cider drinker).

#### **#1719 The Horseshoe, Chipping Sodbury (Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July)**

A beautiful afternoon to set a run around eastern Yate (pronounced Yaah-tay). No real surprises where the trail went, a clockwise trail going north to the woods along the side of Hansons quarry. Across the Wickwar road, the trail continued via the golf course, Sodbury common, Chipping Sodbury sports ground and back to the pub along the Frome Valley path. I set a very similar trail from the Horseshoe in 2021, but in reverse!

A local resident (who had the misfortune to hash in Birmingham with *Nose-job*) had spotted the flour blobs and joined us on the trail and back in the Horseshoe. A selection of ales on handpump welcomed us on entering the pub, Exeter Brewery Avocet (3.9%) and Lighterman (3.5%) were just 2 of 7 beers on offer starting at £4.30 a pint. After too many pubs recently which either had no beer, ran out of beer, or was of poor quality, it was great to find a landlord who makes a great effort. No elected RA again tonight but the stand-in did a decent job with a couple of awards and the naming of Mandy, now called *Don't Come Often*. The local lad, who revealed his hash handle was *Michelle Wet*, was promised a down-down on his next K&A hash.

My Verdict – much better than my last trail from the Lockkeeper – Pub/Beer a very biased 10/10.

#### **#1720 George and Dragon, Felton (Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023)**

A joint run with the BOGS of Somerset Hash. Possibly the furthest west K&A have ventured on a normal Wednesday evening hash, and therefore a first time visit to a post-Covid re-opened pub under the flight path to Bristol Airport. On an extremely damp July evening the hares (Our own Le Caniveau and Walky-Talky from BOGS) treated us to a pleasant ramble across the North Somerset countryside. As appears to be the case most days it was a clockwise trail with the obligatory walkers trail for the BOGS. The front-runners (*Lightweight*, *Spiderman* and *X-rated*) inadvertently picked up said walkers trail and were back at the pub long before the rest of the pack. Butcombe Bitter was the only real ale on offer at £4.20 a pint. It was rumoured the pub had the heating on. I think BOGS outnumbered K&A about 12:5 but it's quality not quantity that counts. A combination of the distance, summer holidays, the wet weather and couldn't-be-arsed contributed to the poor K&A numbers.

Verdict – trail 8/10 – Pub/beer 7/10